

# Cold War Propaganda: Russia's "Secret" Military Bases in the Western Hemisphere

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The propaganda hype regarding Russia's creation of military bases in Latin American and the Caribbean is not dying down. At the instigation of 'cold war' centres in the US, lies about 'secret' Russian naval and air force bases operating in Nicaragua, Venezuela and even Argentina regularly appear in the media. More often than not, these types of reports are accompanied by photographs of Tu-160 ('White Swan') and Tu-160MS strategic bombers, the nuclear-powered battlecruiser Petr Velikiy ('Peter the Great'), and the large anti-submarine destroyer Admiral Chabanenko, which laid the foundations for guest visits by Russia's naval and air forces to the American continent in 2008. The most recent example of this kind is the docking of the Russian intelligence collection ship Viktor Leonov in the Port of Havana.

In November 2013, the National Assembly of Nicaragua ratified the government's decision allowing Russian military units, ships and aircraft to visit the republic in the first half of 2014. Their crews have also been given permission to take part in the professional training of Nicaraguan military personnel and to share with them their expertise. The approved document also mentions the naval ships and military aircraft of Cuba, Venezuela, Mexico and the US. In June of this year, Daniel Ortega's government will reapply to parliament to extend this document for a further six months.

Russia's Defence Minister Sergey Shoygu recently announced plans to increase the number of bases abroad. He also mentioned that talks were being held with Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Singapore and the Seychelles. Russia's Deputy Defence Minister Anatoly Antonov explained the situation thus: «When we talk about enhancing the Russian navy's presence in Latin America, we primarily mean creating the conditions for a simplified procedure for our Russian ships to visit Latin American ports. Given their considerable distance from Russian shores, it stands to reason that we would be interested in replenishing our food and water supplies, as well as organising recreation for our sailors. In certain circumstances, we must also be sure we will be able to carry out small and medium repairs to our ships.»

President Daniel Ortega referred to the prospects of Russia's 'presence' on Latin America's friendly shores in a speech to the Nicaraguan military on 6 April. He said that after the Sandinista government returned to power in 2007, it was willing to cooperate with any country that would help strengthen and modernise the army. The US has not offered the country any kind of hope. Despite the previously close ties between Washington and Nicaragua's right-wing governments, the Pentagon has not made any real attempts to equip the Nicaraguan army with modern weapons. The US has always seen the ideology of the Sandinistas as hostile. This is the reason why the Nicaraguan government turned to Russia.

Far-reaching agreements in the sphere of military and technical cooperation have been signed. According to Ortega, Russia's contribution to the military rearmament process was «steady, reliable and extremely important», and was accompanied by the unconditional provision of social and economic help to the Nicaraguan people. Supplies of wheat, agricultural equipment, buses and passenger cars were provided. A considerable amount of money was also allocated for humanitarian and other purposes, including to eliminate the consequences of natural disasters.

Analysing the content of Ortega's speech to the military, the conservative newspaper *La Prensa*, published in Managua, observed that Ortega is «justifying the possible creation of Russian bases in Nicaragua». Here is a quote from Ortega's speech: «How many US military ships visited (our ports) between 2007 and 2012? How many US ships have spent months in our Caribbean and Pacific Ocean ports? Military vessels that have shown up on peacekeeping missions! And how many American soldiers and officers have landed in our country to deploy their bases?... (Foreign) bases are forbidden by the Constitution, but (in reality) bases have still been deployed».

For Ortega, strengthening the security of the country remains a strategic objective. The more powerful the army, the more significant its contribution will be in protecting every region of the country, and the calmer life will be for the Nicaraguan people in our troubled times. Ortega places particular emphasis on the need to strengthen the fight against drug trafficking, bearing in mind that Nicaragua is located 'at the crossroads' of cocaine deliveries and other hallucinogenics from Colombia, Peru and Bolivia to the US. Nicaragua's armed forces need to have modern operational capabilities to seize and destroy consignments of drugs on the ground, in the air and at sea. One would think that the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), which has long been operating in the country, might have helped modernise its weaponry. But the Agency is developing the bilateral cooperation exclusively in its own interests, which is to expand America's military presence in the country.

The authoritarian methods practised by the DEA are increasingly alienating Latin American leaders. This is why the appropriate structures in Nicaragua and other Central American countries have reacted so positively to Russia's project for training anti-drug officers in a special school opened in Managua. Professionals from the Federal Narcotics Service of Russia (FSKN) teach at the school, and those attending the school are from Nicaragua, Salvador, Panama, Honduras, the Dominican Republic and other countries in the region. The first batch of operatives has already graduated. The US is jealous of the success of the FSKN's work in Nicaragua and in Latin America generally. It is for this reason that Viktor Ivanov, chairman of the State Anti-Narcotics Committee and director of FSKN, has been put on a US government blacklist.

Plans for a collaboration between Russia and Nicaragua to explore and use space is also being regarded by the Pentagon as «quite suspicious» in terms of its «military component». Among other things, the agreement provides for the building of a GLONASS satellite monitoring system in Nicaragua. Through the country's media under its 'wardship', the US Embassy is waging a hostile campaign against the project, placing emphasis on its 'probable' use by Russia for the purposes of espionage. This concern of the Embassy, an embassy in which the majority of its 200 diplomats are US intelligence agency employees who are intentionally working against the Ortega regime, is nothing but ironic.

Russia is approaching the development of military ties with Venezuela and Cuba in a similar vein. It seems that in the foreseeable future, the problem of creating permanent Russian military bases there with a large-scale infrastructure and military personnel deployed for long periods of time will no longer be an issue.

Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has called reports on Russia's creation of military bases in Argentina a 'provocative duck'. The only foreign base off the coast of Argentina is located on the Falkland Islands, which is occupied by the British. Argentine President Cristina Fernández has called the island NATO's «nuclear base», «the largest existing base to the south of the 50th parallel».

NATO strategists are planning on getting Colombia's armed forces involved in the activities of the military alliance. In June 2013, Juan Carlos Pinzón, Colombia's Minister of National Defence, signed an agreement in Brussels on cooperation and the exchange of information with NATO members. Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos said in this regard that the agreement had been entered into «with the further aim» of joining the organisation.

One of the articles on the website [aporrea.org](http://aporrea.org) commented that sooner or later, there will be an adequate response to the global military expansion of the US and NATO: «If the US has a countless number of bases in the world, then it is logical to suppose that other powers will begin to create their own strongholds. If the US has filled Europe with missiles aimed at Russia, then it stands to reason that Russia may respond appropriately. The United States is to blame for spreading violence across the world in its desire to preserve its hegemony. Following their defeat in Afghanistan, the Americans are being forced to withdraw from the country without having managed to set up any strongholds with missiles aimed primarily at Russia, China, India and Iran. But the message is clear: after the Second World War, the only aggressor on the planet was the USA».

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